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DCI/ICS 82-3888
9 December 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: [redacted] 25X1
Director, Intelligence Community Staff

SUBJECT: SIG (Space): Fifth Orbiter Issue

REFERENCE: 2 December 1982, Memo from [redacted] to D/ICS, SIG (Space) 25X1
Meeting, 3 December 1982, [redacted] 25X1

1. The subject issue was discussed at the 3 December 1982 SIG (Space) meeting, but there were widely differing views on the central issue. The chairman, Mr. McFarlane, therefore, proposed that a paper be prepared promptly that reflects accurately the agency views on the issue. The paper would be sent to the President as background for his decisions on the NASA budget. [redacted] 25X1

2. A meeting of the working group was convened on 7 December 1982 to prepare the paper summarizing the positions of each agency (Attachment 1, draft memo to the President plus agency positions). Note that DoD, JCS, and OMB have not yet provided written statements of their positions. [redacted] 25X1

3. The DCI position statement that we provided to the Working Group supports Alternative II--maintenance of an orbiter production capability--and is consistent with the position that we took at the SIG (Space) meeting. It has been informally coordinated with the NRO staff. NASA provided costs and additional descriptive material on Alternative II on 6 December 1982 (see Attachment 2). [redacted] 25X1

4. We had originally anticipated that there would be time for you to submit our position formally and attach the recent CIA estimate on Soviet space programs. However, we understand that the NSC-imposed deadline is noon today (9 December). With your concurrence, we therefore plan to add to our position statement a paragraph summarizing the key judgments in this estimate and provide it to the NSC Staff (see Attachment 3 for revised DCI position statement). [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] 25X1

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5. We now understand (based on information received late last night) that NASA and OMB have told the NSC staff that they are willing to accept Alternative II. Because of the increased support for this alternative, Judge Clark is now likely to recommend this alternative to the President. (He previously appeared to support Alternative III, Continue Full Orbiter Production.) [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] 25X1

Attachments:
1 - Draft memo to the President, "FY 1984 Funding Decision on the Fifth Space Shuttle (Orbiter)
2 - NASA's costs and descriptive material on Alternative II
3 - DCI position statement

This memorandum is unclassified when separated from attachments and caveats physically removed.

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Approved For Release 2009/05/05 : CIA-RDP84M00395R000600060004-6

December 7, 1982

OSTP POSITION

An FY 1984 commitment to a fifth orbiter would be counterproductive in implementing the President's Space Policy (NSDD-42). Purchase of a fifth orbiter now would produce a large overcapacity of U.S. Government launch services, resulting in a reduction of U.S. space capability and technology, and higher costs of doing both government and commercial business in space. This will reduce the utility of space to the U.S. Government and discourage private sector investment.

The U.S. Government therefore should not commit to a fifth orbiter, but should maintain adequate support for a four-orbiter fleet.

December 7, 1982

AMPLIFICATION OF OSTP POSITION

Deletion of the FY 1984 budget request for funding to produce and deliver a fifth orbiter, in parallel with the provision of adequate support for a four-orbiter fleet, would demonstrate U.S. commitment to space leadership. This leadership position would be based on resource investment in high priority areas yielding maximum economic, scientific, and national security return, rather than adherence to past policies which would result in significant space transportation overcapacity (and additional costs). Furthermore, unless sizeable additional funds are committed, purchase of a fifth orbiter would lock the U.S. government into a launch technology that will be over two decades old for much of the remainder of the century.

While long term (decades) launch service demand predictions are uncertain, reasonable upper and lower bounds have been estimated for the period when the fifth orbiter would become available. These estimates show clearly that a four-orbiter fleet would provide a significant safety margin for national-security-related payloads even in the extremely unlikely event of the irrevocable loss of two orbiters. Indeed, the four-orbiter fleet would assure adequate backup for all expected users--national security, commercial, and foreign--except in the highly unlikely circumstance of both much greater than expected demand and lower than expected orbiter performance.

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